

24 October 1984

DELIBERATIONS BEGIN IN ROSENTHAL TRIAL
ATLANTA

A federal jury began deliberations Wednesday in the drug smuggling trial of Harold Rosenthal, a former bail bondsman charged with directing the biggest cocaine trafficking ring in the nation's history.

Rosenthal was charged with heading a smuggling operation that brought more than five tons of cocaine worth an estimated \$3.8 billion into the country between September 1981 and January 1984.

Defense attorneys claimed Rosenthal was doing the smuggling with a special dispensation from the federal government because he was spying on Marxist groups in Colombia for the CIA.

Federal attorney Craig Gillen said in his closing argument Tuesday that Rosenthal and his co-conspirators were motivated by greed.

"The greed has gotten to you and your co-conspirators," Gillen said.

Rosenthal was among 53 people indicted across the country in the climax to "Operation Southern Comfort," a 18-month investigation by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force.

Rosenthal was arrested by U.S. agents and Colombian officers in Bogota, Colombia, a year ago while stuck in a traffic jam. He had escaped in 1981 from a federal facility in Memphis, Tenn., where he was serving 31 years on a drug smuggling conviction.

Defense attorney Steve Sadow claimed Rosenthal was recruited by a mystery figure, Loy Shipp, described by Sadow as a military intelligence expert. Shipp persuaded Rosenthal to spy on left wing groups in Colombia for the CIA, Sadow said.

Gillen said Rosenthal made up the story about spying and that Shipp was a former major demoted to sergeant during the last five years of his Air Force career, which he spent as an air traffic controller at Dobbins Air Force Base in Marietta.